



Matthew 5:13-16
A New Economy of Righteousness
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Attention:

Why is keeping score so important? It lets you know who wins.

In his book Integrity, Ted Engstrom tells this story: For Coach Cleveland Stroud and the Bulldogs of Rockdale County High School [Conyers, Georgia], it was their championship season: 21 wins and 5 losses on the way to the Georgia boys' basketball tournament in March, then a dramatic come-from-behind victory in the state finals.

But now the new glass trophy case outside the high school gymnasium is bare. Earlier the Georgia High School Association deprived Rockdale County of the championship after school officials said that a player who was scholastically ineligible had played 45 seconds in the first of the school's five postseason games. "We didn't know he was ineligible at the time; we didn't know it until a few weeks ago," Mr. Stroud said. "Some people have said we should have just kept quiet about it, that it was just 45 seconds and the player wasn't an impact player. But you've got to do what's honest and right and what the rules say. I told my team that

People forget the scores of basketball games. They don't ever forget what you're made of.

So how do you keep score in your life? How you keep score shows what you value the most! – Where your heart is, there your treasure will be. Are you keeping score the right way that you may win in life?

Two biblical characters:

- Paul = Philippians 3:3-7
- Zacchaeus = Luke 19:1-2

Jesus has shared the characteristics and purpose of those in the Kingdom of God in the introduction to the Sermon on the Mount. Now He turns his attention to how one enters the Kingdom of God and what he shares is downright shocking!

1. Jesus does not undermine the **LAW**. V 17
 - a. Today when a person legitimately struggles with a doctrine or digs in to look at other understandings of an issue, they are often cast as rebels who suffer from unbelief instead of Bereans who are simply trying to know what they believe and why.
 - b. It would have been the same way with Jesus when he now re-interprets the OT law of God. The Pharisees in particular would have attacked him as being one who was undermining the law.
 - c. Do not think
 - i. Do not come to regard or acknowledge as a custom
 - ii. Regard, think suppose

- iii. Jesus is saying don't just automatically dismiss me as one attacking the law
- d. Abolish
 - i. Literally to loosen what was bound or fastened before
 - ii. I haven't come to untie the laws and let them fly all over the place as if they don't matter
- e. Fulfill –
 - i. Literally to make full, to fill a hollow place – complete make full
 - ii. I have come to accomplish the original intent of the law instead of your practice – like a skeleton with no flesh or like whitewashed tombs – the structure is there but no life inside.
 - iii. “The Lord is well pleased for his righteousness’ sake; he will MAGNIFY THE LAW, and make it honourable” (Isaiah 42:21).

- f. A fellow stopped at a gas station and, after filling the tank on his car, he paid the bill and bought a soft drink. He stood by his car to drink his cola and he watched a couple of men working along the roadside.

One man would dig a hole two or three feet deep and then move on. The other man came along behind and filled in the hole. While one was digging a new hole, the other was about 25 feet behind filling in the old. The men worked right past the fellow with the soft drink and went on down the road. "I can't stand this," said the man tossing the can in a trash container and heading down the road toward the men.

“Hold on,” he said to the men. "Can you tell me what's going on here with this digging?"

"Well, we work for the government, " one of the men said.

"But one of you is digging a hole and the other fills it up. You're not accomplishing anything. Aren't you wasting the People's money?"

"You don't understand, mister," one of the men said, leaning on his shovel and wiping his brow. "Normally there's three of us--me, Sam and Jesse.

"I dig the hole, Sam sticks in the tree and Jesse here puts the dirt back.

Now, just because Sam's sick, that don't mean that Jesse and I can't work."

When it comes to the church of Jesus Christ, sometimes people do not think very much, either. People attend church, but they don't get what church is all about, or they are blinded by assumptions. They just dig holes instead of planting trees.

- 2. In fact, God's law must be **ACCOMPLISHED**. V 18
 - a. Truly I say to you
 - i. Amen – let it be – introduction indicates that what is said next is important and trustworthy
 - b. Pass away
 - i. To perish, not be fulfilled
 - c. Iota = smallest Hebrew letter
 - d. Yod = smallest penstroke for Hebrew – like an apostrophe

- e. Accomplished – to begin to be
- f. The cartoon character Calvin from Calvin and Hobbes once said, “God put me on this earth to accomplish a certain number of things. Right now I’m so far behind I’ll never die.”
SOURCE: Matthew Rogers in "Making Resolutions that Last."
- g. Jesus elevates the view of the law!
 - i. It will be done, not just by some but for all!
 - ii. Even the punctuation is inspired word of God! – don’t overdo this but what Jesus is saying here is that all of the Word of God is the Word of God
 - iii. Isaiah 55:11 - so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.
- h. The implication here is inspiring and terrifying at the same time
 - i. God will make sure His purpose is accomplished (which is demonstrated in the fact that the Son of God is now on seen preaching these words)
 - ii. That means that every transgression and disobedience will receive its just reward – Hebrews 2:1-4
- 3. Kingdom significance is reserved for those who **DO** and **TEACH** others to **DO** God’s law. V 19
 - a. One who relaxes least commandment and teaches others to do so is least
 - i. Relaxes = to loosen, untie, unbind
 - b. Issue is ironic: - the Pharisees are seen as being hyper-spiritual, fanatical even, but in actuality they have relaxed the commands of the law because they have removed God and His glory from them!
 - c. they have only devised a system to help them worship the law, not the God that law was intended to point to!
 - d. One who does
 - i. Action, doing, to fulfill
 - e. And teaches others to do them
 - i. Teach
 - 1. To teach with the aim of affecting the will of the one being taught – not transmission of information – aimed at life change
 - 2. Definition of college education = the passing of information from the tattered notes of the professor to the scattered notes of the student without the information passing through the minds of either!
 - 3. There is an expectation of learning and assimilation by the one being taught
 - 4. Does not just hears – James 1:22 But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.
 - 5. Where in the church do you see this happening? Are we guilty of being transmitters of information no expectation of learning and life change?
 - f. Greatness in the Kingdom is not based on outward conformity to the law without consideration of the person of God!

- g. Greatness in the Kingdom is based on a changed heart that results in behavior change as well and sharing that with others
- h. A parable is told of a community of ducks waddling off to duck church one Sunday to hear their duck preacher. After they waddled into the duck sanctuary, the service began and the duck preacher spoke eloquently of how God had given the ducks wings with which to fly. He pounded the pulpit with his beak and said, With these wings, there is nowhere we ducks can not go! There is no God-given task we ducks cannot accomplish! With these wings we no longer need walk through life. We can soar high in the sky!

Shouts of Amen!” were quacked throughout the duck congregation. The duck preacher concluded his message by exclaiming, With our wings we can fly through life! WE.....CAN.....FLY!!!!” More ducks quacked out loud AMENS! in response. Every duck loved the service. In fact all the ducks that were present commented on what a wonderfully convicting message they had heard from their duck preacher... and then they left the church and waddled all the way home.

APPLICATION

Too often We waddle away from worship
 the same way we waddled in....
 Unchanged.

	Greatness	Obscurity
Pharisees	Many followers, strict observance of the law and 613 traditional laws	Not being a Pharisee, being a part of the masses of Judaism
Jesus	Faithful to God’s word and intent of God’s law and to teach others with the intent that they apply it to themselves	Relaxes God’s intent by creating oral tradition to “minsinterpret the law – doesn’t do law as Jesus has fulfilled it

- 4. No amount of human effort can **GRANT ENTRANCE** into the Kingdom of Heaven. V 20
 - a. Scribes
 - i. A scribe or writer – such as was a public service among the Greeks and acted as a reader and recorder of legal and state papers and therefore regarded as a scholar
 - ii. Many = lawyers and members of the Sanhedrin, mentioned with elders, and chief priests
 - iii. Some = experts in God’s written Word – copying teaching and preserving it
 - iv. Most in NT = Pharisees
 - v. Seen as experts in cases where folks were seen as breaking the law of Moses
 - vi. Referee or Judge

- b. Pharisees – 5330 – pharisaion
 - i. After the resettling of the Jewish people in Judea on their return from Babylonian captivity, these were the largest and most prominent religious party
 - ii. Literally “separated ones”
 - iii. Called the pious
 - iv. Believed in Moses law but also added and voluntarily complied with constitutions and traditions of the elders as well as other rigorous religious observances (which they taught was derived from the same place as the written law itself.)
 - v. Controlled the synagogues and exercised great control over the population
 - vi. Wore clothing that distinguished themselves (another reason not to wear a suit and tie)
- c. Collect boards of “Most righteous person I know” – use them here to convey the hyperbole to the congregation.
- d. Debrief the scorecard activity
 - i. Acknowledge there were some “moles” who were exaggeratedly prideful and pharisaical or despairing
 - ii. Did it give you a tinge of shame or guilt not to be able to check some of these?
 - iii. Did it give you a tinge of pride that you scored so well or could check some that most could not?
- e. When Jesus said this, what the Jews around him heard was “No one can enter the Kingdom of Heaven.”
- 5. Jesus came to do what no one else could ever do: **FULFILL THE LAW.** V 17
 - a. Jesus is the only one ever to keep the commands of God perfectly – no one else has or will.
 - b. Therefore only Jesus meets the requirements of verse 20!
 - c. The unbelievable news is 2 Corinthians 5:21 “God made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us that in Him we might become the righteousness of God!”
 - d. Verse 20 declares that Jesus is the only way!
 - e. For some, the error is found in verse 19 – the relaxing of the commandments – what Keller calls irreligion – the pursuit of worldly things to the exclusion of godly things. Some in this room could give testimony that if they had to do it over they would not pursue that status or money or whatever and instead pursue righteousness and let God add all the other things they need. – Matthew 6:33 “But seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and these things (needs) will be added to you.”
 - f. For others, the error is found in verse 20 – in working to keep every commandment – what Keller calls religion – the pursuit of righteousness by doing godly things and thereby being acceptable to God. – Ephesians 2:8-9 “For by grace you have been saved through faith and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not as a result of works so that no one may boast.
 - g. Two biblical characters
 - i. Paul – Philippians 3:7

ii. Zacchaeus – Luke 19:3ff

Conclusion:

UNEXPECTED GRACE

I left work early so I could have some uninterrupted study time right before the final in my Youth Issues class. When I got to class, everybody was doing their last minute studying. The teacher came in and said he would review with us for just a little bit before the test. We went through the review, most of it right on the study guide, but there were some things he was reviewing that I had never heard of. When questioned about it, he said that they were in the book and we were responsible for everything in the book. We couldn't really argue with that.

Finally it was time to take the test.

"Leave them face down on the desk until everyone has one and I'll tell you to start," our prof instructed.

When we turned them over, every answer on the test was filled in! The bottom of the last page said the following:

"This is the end of the Final Exam. All the answers on your test are correct. You will receive an 'A' on the final exam. The reason you passed the test is because the creator of the test took it for you. All the work you did in preparation for this test did not help you get the A. You have just experienced...grAce."

He then went around the room and asked each student individually, "What is your grade? Do you deserve the grade you are receiving? How much did all your studying for this exam help you achieve your final grade?"

Now I am not a crier by any stretch of the imagination, but I had to fight back tears when answering those questions and thinking about how the Creator has passed the test for me.

Talking about how some of us had probably studied hours and some just a few minutes but had all received the same grade, he pointed to a story Jesus told in Matthew 20. The owner of a vineyard hired people to work in his field and agreed to pay them a certain amount. Several different times during the day, he hired more workers. When it was time to pay them, they all received the same amount. When the ones who had been hired first thing in the morning began complaining, the boss said, "Should you be angry because I am kind?" (Matthew 20:15).

The teacher said he had never done this kind of final before and probably would never do it again, but because of the content of many of our class discussions, he felt like we needed to experience grace.

Have you thanked your Creator today because of the grace you have experienced?

SOURCE: MikeysFunnies.com. This happened 04/30/02 in a youth ministry class at Hannibal-LaGrange College.

What Jesus just did was completely change the scorecard! One not based on works but faith in Him, the fulfillment of the law!

On what are you depending for your righteousness?

Would you today renounce your self-righteous reliance on your own works to gain God's approval?

Would you today renounce your self-indulgent rejection of any authority but your own?

Would you today see Jesus Christ full of grace and glory and depend only upon His completed work in His life and death for your righteousness?